

TRANSPORT SYSTEM FOR PORTABLE AUGER

Cross Reference To Related Applications

[0001] This application claims the benefit of U.S. Provisional Application No. 60/442,252, filed January 24, 2003, hereby incorporated herein by reference.

5 Field of the Invention

[0002] The present invention relates to transport systems for portable augers.

Background of the Invention

[0003] Portable augers are used for earth boring activities, such as digging holes for fence posts. The portable auger may be transported by one or more individuals wheeling it from site to site, either by manpower alone, or with assistance from a powered drive. The portable
10 auger may also be moved or towed by a machine, such as a truck, from site to site. If a powered drive is used, the powered drive unit must be disengaged from each wheel that it is driving to avoid damage to the drive unit when moving the auger with another machine. One object of the present invention is to provide a transport system for a portable auger that has a
15 dedicated powered drive unit for wheeled, power-assist by an individual. Another objective of the present invention is to provide an uncomplicated means for allowing the power-driven wheels to freewheel when the portable auger is moved by another machine. Another object of the present invention is to provide separate optional means for locking the output of the powered drive unit.

20 Brief Summary of the Invention

[0004] In one aspect, the present invention is an apparatus for and method of providing a transport system for a portable auger wherein a dedicated powered drive unit is provided for power-assisted, wheeled movement of the portable auger by an operator. Means are provided to allow a wheel connected to the output of the dedicated powered drive unit to freewheel
25 when the portable auger is moved or towed by another machine. Optionally, separate means

may be provided for locking the output of the dedicated powered drive unit when the portable auger is moved or towed by another machine.

[0005] Other aspects of the invention are set forth in this specification

Brief Description of the Drawings

5 [0006] For the purpose of illustrating the invention, there is shown in the drawings a form that is presently preferred; it being understood, however, that this invention is not limited to the precise arrangements and instrumentalities shown.

[0007] FIG. 1 is an isometric view of one example of a structural frame used with the transport system of the present invention.

10 [0008] FIG. 2(a) is a top view of the structural frame illustrated in FIG. 1.

[0009] FIG. 2(b) is a side view of the structural frame illustrated in FIG. 1.

[0010] FIG. 2(c) is a front view of the structural frame illustrated in FIG. 1.

[0011] FIG. 3(a) is a rear/operator position view of one example of an axle housing, with associated components, that is used with the transport system of the present invention.

15 [0012] FIG. 3(b) is a right side view of the axle housing illustrated in FIG. 3(a).

[0013] FIG. 3(c) is a left side view of the axle housing illustrated in FIG. 3(a).

[0014] FIG. 4 is a bottom view of the axle housing illustrated in FIG. 3(a).

[0015] FIG. 5(a) is a bottom isometric view of the axle housing illustrated in FIG. 3(a).

20 [0016] FIG. 5(b) is an exploded bottom isometric view of the axle housing illustrated in FIG. 3(a).

[0017] FIG. 6(a) and FIG. 6(b) are another example of a transport system of the present invention.

[0018] FIG. 7 is a side view of the structural frame illustrated in FIG. 2(b) with a typical auger and power source associated with the transport system.

Detailed Description of the Invention

[0019] Referring now to the drawings, wherein like numerals indicate like elements, there is shown in the figures one example of the transport system for a portable auger of the present invention. In FIG. 1, and FIG. 2(a) through FIG. 2(c), transport system 10 is shown without auger, power source and wheels attached. Lever tube 12 is suitably attached (e.g. by weld) to frame brace 14 and power source frame 16. Frame bracket 14 is suitably attached to power source frame 16. In this non-limiting example of the invention optional frame brace 14 provides a rigid connection between lever tube 12 and power source frame 16. A power source is suitably attached to frame 16. For example the power source may be pivotally connected to frame 16 via openings 16a and 16b so that the base of the power source will maintain a horizontal orientation when the portable auger is pivoted about its axles to which wheels are attached as further described below. Center pivot tube 18 is suitably connected at one end to lever tube 12 and at the opposing end to axle housing 20. Pivot tube gussets 22, suitably attached to center pivot tube 18 and the top of axle housing 20 may be provided for additional strength at the center pivot tube and axle housing point of connection. The auger may be pivotally attached to the lever tube 12 by insertion of a handle into the lever tube. For example, raised hole 12a and opening 12b can be used to provide a quick connect/disconnect means for locking the inserted handle in place. The auger can be pivotally attached to the handle. A wheel is attached to an axle protruding from each end of the axle housing as further described below.

[0020] FIG. 7 illustrates a power source 17 (dashed outline of power source) pivotally mounted within frame 16 and about openings 16a and 16b by suitable fasteners. Also typically illustrated in FIG. 7 is auger 11 rotatably mounted about openings 13a in handle 13. The auger is shown in solid lines in a typical stowed position during transport of the portable auger and in dashed lines when in use to bore a hole. Wheel 15 is shown attached to freewheeling axle 46; a second wheel is attached to drive hub 40 as further described below.

[0021] One or more chain brackets **24** are suitably attached to the front end of power source frame **16**. In other examples of the invention, a tow bar is attached to the front end of the power source frame. When towed by another machine, such as a truck, a connecting means, such as a chain, can be attached between the truck and chain brackets **24** or tow bar. In tow mode, the portable auger is generally oriented in the horizontal position shown in **FIG. 2(b)**. An individual can move the portable auger by sufficiently lowering the end of lever tube **12** to which the auger is attached so that the power source is raised off of the ground. Lowering the end of the lever tube to which the auger is attached pivots the transport system about the axles to which the wheels are attached. Transport drive controls can be mounted near the auger end of the lever tube so that the operator can activate and deactivate the transport powered drive unit that is mounted in axle housing **20** as further described below. The auger when not in use, for example, during tow or movement by an individual, is generally stowed adjacent to the lever tube by pivoting the auger about its connection point to the lever tube or to the handle connected to the lever tube. For use of the auger, the end of the center pivot tube to which the auger is attached is allowed to raise up until the power source (serving as a counterweight) rests on the ground, and the auger is pivoted down from its stowed position to a generally vertical orientation with respect to the auger's axial length. Auger drive controls can be mounted near the end of the lever tube to which the auger is attached so that the operator can activate and deactivate the auger drive that can be mounted to the top of the axial length of the auger.

[0022] The utilized power system may be any power system that can be self-contained on the transport frame, such as an electrical or hydraulic system. In the preferred example of the invention, the power system is hydraulic. For the preferred embodiment, the power source is a hydraulic power source providing pressurized hydraulic fluid in suitable hoses to the separate transport powered drive unit and auger powered drive unit via the transport drive controls and auger drive controls, respectively.

[0023] In this non-limiting example of the invention, axle housing **20** has a number of housing plates suitably attached to it (e.g., by welding) for mounting associated components as described below. Transport powered drive unit **30** is suitably mounted to the axle housing.

For example, as shown in the figures, transport powered drive unit **30** is attached to axle housing plate **20a** by screws and lockwashers **60a** and **60b**, respectively. Output shaft **32** of the transport powered drive unit is rigidly connected to powered wheel axle **34** by suitable means. For example, as shown in the figures, connecting sleeve **36** slips over mating ends of output shaft **32** and axle **34**. Screws **62a** pass through holes **36a**, **32a** and **34c**, in the connecting sleeve, output shaft and axle, respectively and mate with nuts **62b** to hold the output shaft and axle rigidly together. One alternative means of fastening the connecting sleeve to the output shaft and axle are to provide threaded recesses in the output shaft and axle into which suitable fasteners are inserted. In this non-limiting example of the invention a pair of flange bearing assemblies **38** are used to support drive wheel axle **34**. The inner bearing assembly is attached to axle housing plate **20b** by screws and nuts **64a** and **64b**, respectively. Outer bearing assembly is attached to axle housing plate **20c** by screws and nuts **66a** and **66b**, respectively. Plate **20c** also serves as an end plate of the axle housing in this example of the invention. Drive hub **40** is suitably inserted on, or attached to, the end of drive wheel axle **34** so that it will freewheel around the axle if hub locking pin **42** is not inserted through holes **40a** in the drive hub and hole **34a** in the drive wheel axle. One means of attaching drive hub **40** to the end of drive wheel axle **34** is by use of a nut **44** threaded onto drive wheel axle **34**, as shown in **FIG. 4**. The nut must be screwed on to the end of the drive wheel axle. A wheel (not shown) is secured to drive hub **40** via inserting suitable fasteners through holes **40b**, which are radially disposed around an inner circumference of the drive hub. In this example of the invention, the wheel at the opposite end of the axle housing is not power driven and is always freewheeling. This wheel is suitably attached to free wheeling axle **46**. When the wheel connected to drive hub **40** is not power driven by transport power drive unit **30**, hub locking pin **42** must be removed from hub **40** and drive wheel axle **34**.

[0024] In another example of the invention, in addition to the drive hub locking and unlocking means, separate means may be provided for securely locking the output of the transport powered drive unit. As illustrated in **FIG. 6(a)** and **FIG. 6(b)**, drive axle pin **48** is inserted through openings **20d** in axle housing **20** and opening **34b** in drive wheel axle **34** to lock the drive wheel axle, and the output shaft **32** of transport powered drive unit **30** to which it is attached. In alternative examples of the invention, rather than locking through a hole in

the drive wheel axle, a hole may be provided in the output shaft for direct locking of the output shaft.

5 **[0025]** In operation of this non-limiting example of the invention, when transport system **10** is being wheeled by an individual with powered assist from the transport powered drive unit, hub locking pin **42** is inserted through openings **40a** in drive hub **40** and opening **34a** in drive wheel axle **34**. The hub locking pin may be secured in this position by using a suitable fastener, such as cotter pin **42a**.

10 **[0026]** If the optional means for locking the output of the transport powered drive unit is provided, in this non-limiting example of the invention, when the transport powered drive unit is being used, drive axle pin **48** is not inserted through openings **20d** in axle housing **20** and opening **34b** in drive wheel axle **34**, and the drive axle pin may be attached by a chain, or similar fastener, to the axle housing and stowed in a hole in a tow bar, if used, or in optional pin holder **50**.

15 **[0027]** In operation of this non-limiting example of the invention, when the transport powered drive unit is not being used, hub locking pin **42** is not inserted through openings **40a** in drive hub **40** and opening **34a** in drive wheel axle **34**. Hub locking pin **42**, and its fastener, if used, may be attached by a chain, or other suitable fastener, to the axle housing, and stowed in a hole in a tow bar, if used, or in an optional pin holder on the structural frame of the transport system.

20 **[0028]** If the optional means for locking the output of the transport powered drive unit is provided, when the transport powered drive unit is not being used, drive axle pin **48** is inserted through openings **20d** in axle housing **20** and opening **34b** in drive wheel axle **34**.

25 **[0029]** In the present example of the invention, only one of the two wheels used in the transport system is power driven by the transport powered drive unit. In alternative examples of the invention, both wheels may be power driven, and a drive axle pin and hub locking pin can be provided for each of the two power driven wheels.

[0030] The foregoing examples do not limit the scope of the disclosed invention. The scope of the disclosed invention is further set forth in the appended claims.